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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BRATISLAVA 000528

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EUR/CE KORAY ERTAS AND JAMIE LAMORE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/14/2018

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [HU](#) [LO](#)

SUBJECT: SERIES OF SLOVAK-HUNGARIAN FLARE-UPS FORCE PRIME  
MINISTERS TO MEET

REF: BRATISLAVA 507 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Obsitnik for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: Since the soccer match in Dunajska Streda on November 1 when Hungarian hooligans were expelled from the arena with surprising (some say excessive) force by Slovak police (reftel), several subsequent events involving ethnically fueled extremism have forced the rhetoric-slinging of the past two years to a turning point. PM Fico and PM Gyurcsany have agreed to meet in the border town of Komarno on Saturday, November 15. It will be their first meeting in Slovakia since PM Fico took office in July 2006. End Summary.

Hungarians Commemorate 1938 with Nazi Symbols  
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¶2. (U) On Saturday, November 8, 41 members of the Hungarian Guard, some dressed in reproductions of Nazi-era Hungarian uniforms, went to Kralovsky Chlmec in southeastern Slovakia, to lay wreaths at two war memorials and honor the anniversary of the return of southern Slovakia to Hungary in 1938. 28 of the 41 men were later arrested by Slovak police for wearing banned symbols of despotism and exhibiting propaganda against human freedom, for which they could face six months to four years in prison if convicted by a Slovak court. That evening, PM Fico, Interior Minister Kalinak, and FM Kubis held a press conference, during which they condemned the Hungarian Nazis, and FM Kubis relayed his objections to this act to Hungarian FM Kinga Goncz.

¶3. (U) The 28 Hungarian Guardsmen were released on Sunday, November 9, and returned to Hungary. We have heard from our contacts here in Slovakia that laws banning despotic symbols and fascist propaganda do not exist in Hungary, and because of this Hungarian officials are often unable to curb extremist acts by the Hungarian Guard.

Border Blockade Largely Symbolic  
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¶4. (U) On Monday, November 10, the radical Hungarian Jobbik party mobilized forces near the Hungarian border town of Rajka, which is populated by a majority of Slovak citizens, many of whom commute to Bratislava. Though they intended to block the border crossing, reports indicate that the Jobbik did not halt the flow of traffic, and were primarily reduced to protest. Local media reported the story of one Slovak citizen resident in Rajka who is receiving donated protection from a private Hungarian security company after an extremist Hungarian website published his name, photo and address, and an allegation that he had spit on the Jobbik protesters.

We All Agree That Tensions Have Escalated Too Far  
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¶5. (C) PM Gyurcsany has refused multiple overtures from PM Fico to meet, yet the current wave of Hungarian extremists'

actions appear to have forced the issue for the Hungarian government. A Hungarian diplomat in Bratislava, Gabor Berta, told PolOff on November 12 that on November 11 SMK chairman Pal Csaky told Gyurscany the situation is getting "beyond control," and after that Gyurscany called Fico and agreed to meet. However, on the margins of a private meeting on an unrelated topic, PM Fico told Ambassador Obsitnik on November 10 that he was going to meet Gyurscany in Komarno to discuss the entire situation. Berta said that he expects Fico and Gyurscany will only meet privately for 20 minutes. As the two PMs "know each other, and know they don't like or trust each other," both sides will agree in advance on a joint statement promoting cooperation, shared EU experience, and a desire to move forward as neighbors and allies.

16. (SBU) As reported retfel and previous, the boorish SNS leader and governing coalition member Jan Slota has been spouting crude anti-Hungarian rhetoric before and during his tenure as a coalition member, and has enjoyed very limited censorship from the Fico administration. SMK, still distracted and divided by its own recent leadership change, has done little to tamp down the controversy, and has repeatedly employed the help of Hungarian FM Goncz to defend the rights of the Hungarian minority in Slovakia. On the same day the contingent from SMK was urging Gyurcsany to meet Fico and calm the passions, SMK's vice-chairman Miklos Duraj (who leads the pro-autonomy wing of the SMK) called for the Hungarian minority to be placed under an EU protectorate. But there is at least this much progress: in response to the border incidents, both prime ministers have shifted their rhetoric to place the blame not on nationalists from the other side, but on extremists, and they have called on their

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publics not to be swayed by them.

COMMENT

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17. (C) It is clear that the antagonistic political rhetoric we have heard for the past two years has finally begun to manifest itself as concrete, confrontational actions by disgruntled fringe groups. Most of the commentary in the press indicates these actions seem absurd to the average Slovak. What is still unclear is whether this meeting between the Prime Ministers will provide a real turning point and pave the way for smoother Hungarian-Slovak relations, or if both Fico and Gyurscany have allowed other voices to dominate the debate for too long, and are exhibiting mature statesmanship too late to take control of it.

OBSITNIK